

The grace that is freely bestowed upon it may overflow in its social relations ; but those relations can supply no particle of spiritual nourishment to make easier the reception of grace. Like the primeval confusion into which the fallen Angel plunged on his fatal mission, they are a chaos of brute matter, a wilderness of dry bones, a desert unsanctified and incapable of contributing to sanctification. "It is certain that absolutely none among outward things, under whatever name they may be reckoned, has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or liberty, . . . One thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification and Christian liberty ; and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ/" "

The difference between loving men as a result of first loving God, and learning to love God through a growing "love for men, may"not, at first sight, appear profound. To Luther it seemed an abyss, and Luther was right. It was, in a sense, nothing less than the Reformation itself. For carried, as it was not carried by Luther, to its logical result, the argument made, not only good works, but sacraments and the Church itself unnecessary. The question of the religious significance of that change of emphasis, and of the validity of the intellectual processes by which Luther reached his conclusions, is one for theologians. Its effects

on social
theory were staggering. Since salvation is
bestowed
by the operation of grace in the heart
and by that
alone, the whole fabric of organized religion,
which had
mediated between the individual soul and its
Maker—
divinely commissioned hierarchy,
systematized activities,
corporate institutions—drops away, as the
blasphemous
trivialities of a religion of works. The
mediaeval
conception of the social order, which had
regarded it as
a highly articulated organism of members
contributing
in their different degrees to a spiritual
purpose, was
shattered, and differences which had been
distinctions
within a larger unity were now set in
irreconcilable